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... ANYONE WHO'S EVER tried to raise a large puppy with a small kitten knows that only one thing gets raised:

The roof.

Spade, the puppy, and Clarence, the kitten, at my house belong to a mutual-admiration society. They both love me. They loathe each other.

When I try to cook, they turn the kitchen into the Indianapolis Speedway. When I do the dishes, I'm a juggler running an obstacle course.

Spade spent the Summer lying on the flower garden. Now that Winter is near, he lies on Clarence. Clarence merely lies. He lies about the necessity for going out, the reason for coming in, and his inability to distinguish between his sandbox and the living-room rug.

Originally the plan was for an outdoor dog and an indoor cat. The dog lunges in every time the door is opened and the cat shoots out. I fall down.

Spade now weighs half as much as I do. I could give him a bath more often if I could lift him. It's all I can manage to lift his muddy paws off my best dress and his toenails off my torn nylons. While I am doing this, he slobbers on my face.

He loves cat food. He eats what I put down for Clarence and then steps in the bowl of milk. Clarence sits in Spade's dish and eats dog food.

Clarence hates catnip but he rolls in the kitty repellent I sprinkle on the rug. When I type, he cries and sits on the typewriter. Spade stands outside the window and howls.

When I go out to call Clarence, Spade hurries to stand on my shoes. When I call Spade, Clarence emerges from the bushes and climbs a tree. He can't get down.

Spade spends more time on his doghouse than in it. Clarence has a marvelous basket designed especially for cats. He sleeps in an old box. Neither of them ever gets sick unless I'm leaving on a trip, and then they both do.

I have considered reserving myself a nice padded cell. There would be no barking there, no meowing, gnawing, or galloping. The milk bill, the cleaning bill, the laundry bill, and the grocery bill would all return to normal.

But not me. I'd never be the same again.

Patty Johnson